



GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Testimony in SUPPORT of Raised Bill No 348 AAC Post-Election Audits

Senator Musto, Representative Jutila and Members of the GAE Committee, my name is Timothy De Carlo, and I am the Registrar of Voters from the City of Waterbury, as well as the Vice Chair of ROVAC's Legislative Committee. I am here today to testify in support of SB 348.

ROVAC is in support of the proposed changes contained in Section 1 of the bill. This bill as purposed would make three distinct changes to the current statute. The first would be to limit the amount of polling places selected for a post-election audit to no more than three per municipality. The second would reduce the percentage of total precincts audits from 10% to 5%. The third change would allow for technological advances, when available, to be used in future audits.

The current law mandates that all polling precincts in a municipality be placed in a lottery to determine which polling precincts will be chosen for a post-election audit. Many of Connecticut's larger cities currently have over 20 polling precincts, while smaller towns maintain only 1 polling place per municipality. This creates an unfair balance when towns are drawn at random for the post election audit.

During the post-election audit of 2013, 66 polling places state-wide were randomly selected. Of that number, eleven towns were selected multiple times, including the city of Stamford which was chosen 3 times, Meriden 3 times, and Wethersfield 3 times. The City of Waterbury was selected five times, which was the most of any municipality audited that year. A similar pattern was repeated during the 2012 post-election audit with the City of New Haven being selected six times, Stamford four and West Haven three times.

These cities, due to their population; have a much larger body of voters than smaller towns. Therefore the cost of an audit varies greatly from town to town. During an audit, teams of two people recount, by hand, each ballot that went through the voting tabulator on Election Day. If a large town or city has multiple districts chosen, many thousands of ballots must be hand counted. This also impacts a municipality's budget and can lead to great financial stress on a larger town or city. It is very difficult for towns to budget the money for an audit as some towns will not be chosen while others could see five or more audits.

The language in this bill reduces the unfair disadvantage that larger towns and cities face, and puts all of Connecticut's municipalities on a more equal playing field by limiting the number of precincts each municipality may be required to audit post election.

Currently Connecticut conducts post-election audits of 10% of its total precincts statewide. SB 348 would change the amount to 5% of the total precincts. Twenty five other states conduct post-election audits. Connecticut and Hawaii are the only states that audit 10% of the total precincts. The majority

of other states such as California, Texas, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Florida conduct post-election audits for 5% or less of their total precincts. ROVAC supports adjusting the amount of precincts that are audited to 5% as is done in most states with post-election audits.

ROVAC also supports changes to the statute to allow for future automated hand counting of ballots for post-election audits. This bill would allow the Secretary of the State's office to implement newer cost saving technology in the future for post-election audits.

We support the use of new technology that not only streamlines post-election audits but also helps to curb the costs that are associated with them while simultaneously ensuring greater accuracy. However, we do not support the measure in this bill that would allow for the use of another tabulator to be used as the automated device. We recommend the use of a completely independent device that would independently confirm the accuracy of our voting system.

While ROVAC applauds the Secretary of State's intention in HB5492 to move the current manual post-election auditing to an automated system, we believe that a pilot program is unnecessary at this time, and would only further delay bringing our auditing process into the twenty-first century. We are confident that the work that the UConn Voter Center has done in this area is ready to be used across the state, and do not see a reason to delay this money saving technology.

HB5492 also requires the legislative body of a municipality to be involved in deciding to participate in any automated pilot. This is a significant departure from our current audit process, and ROVAC believes that our registrars are the ones best qualified to make this decision, and involvement by the legislative body is unnecessary.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We welcome the opportunity to work with the committee as well as the Secretary of State's Office to implement a fair post election audit that not only eases the financial burden on our state's municipalities but continues to ensure the security of our election process.